

PLANS FOR A FINER CITY

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*The Official Comprehensive Plan
for the development and improve-
ment of Detroit as approved by the
Mayor and the Common Council*

DETROIT MASTER PLAN

CITY PLAN COMMISSION
CITY OF DETROIT • 1951

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*George F. Emery, Director of City Planning
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PARTICIPATING AGENCIES

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PARTICIPATING STAFF

Planning Design:

Julian Tarrant, Head City Planner, 1943-47

Armin A. Roemer, Principal City Planner

Elmer Mueller, Senior City Planner

*Richard B. Fernbach, Senior City Planner,
1942-48*

*Edward A. Eichstedt, Senior City Planner,
1942-47*

*Byron J. Rockwood, Senior City Planner,
1944-47*

*Donald Monson, Senior City Planner,
1943-49*

Publication:

Merle Henrickson, Senior Publicist

William R. Ewald, Jr., Inter. Publicist

David MacPherson, Senior Draftsman

Frank Barcus, Delineator

Frederick Pryor, Jr., Draftsman

PREFACE

With the publication of this report, the City Plan Commission presents the Master Plan for the City of Detroit in one convenient volume for the information and guidance of those public officials and private citizens concerned with the improvement and development of Detroit.

Ten sections of the Master Plan have been prepared, and have been adopted by the Mayor and the Common Council. They are in use today, guiding the location of public improvements and exerting a potent influence on private building.

A remaining section, the public transit plan, is still unfinished. Completion of that plan must wait the results of transit studies by the Rapid Transit Commission, and port studies by the Port of Detroit Commission.

Because of the large volume of both public and private construction now underway, this report is issued as a reference work to contain all the available information on the Master Plan.

The report presents the plan without attempting to include detailed supporting data. Much of this information has already been presented in publications previously issued by the Commission. It is available at the City Plan Commission office for those who may wish to examine it.

This volume bears the imprint of the City Plan Commission, but the Master Plan is by no means the product of the City Plan Commission alone. Many individuals, both in official positions and as civic minded citizens, have taken part in framing it.

Initiated by the Commission's technical staff in cooperation with the staffs of other public agencies, the plan and its objectives have been reviewed by citizens and civic groups in conferences and public hearings before the Commission. The plan has been studied widely in the published reports of the Commission. After criticism and revision, the plans have been submitted to the Mayor and the Common Council where they have received careful review and approval.

Thus the Detroit Master Plan carries the stamp of approval of the Mayor, the Common Council and the operating departments who will in large part be responsible for its realization.

Since the Master Plan includes many desirable improvements to be realized over a period of years, it is recognized that unforeseen developments may suggest solutions which vary in their specific details from those which are now proposed. The Commission recognizes that these variations in detail are possible and proper, and need not deter from realization of the general objectives and principles set forth in the plan.

The City Plan Commission, with the cooperation of the operating departments, intends to review specific developments as they are proposed, to draft changes and amendments as necessary and to submit these revisions to the Common Council and the Mayor for official adoption. In this way, the Master Plan, rather than becoming static or obsolete, will continue as a living pattern for Detroit's guidance and inspiration.

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INTRODUCTION

Adoption of the Master Plan for Detroit is an event of prime significance. It marks the end of a period in which homes, industry and commerce have competed with each other for space in the city to the detriment of each. It marks the beginning of a period in which the city can apply foresight to its growth. For with established objectives, public officials and private groups can cooperate effectively to create a better environment.

The plan marks the recognition that if a given number of families are going to live in a given neighborhood, they need certain public buildings, lands and services and they need equally to be protected from other aspects of city life which, quite necessary in their place, become nuisances when injected into a living area.

More formally phrased, the Master Plan for Detroit is a set of long-range, integrated plans and programs, prepared by the municipality and formally adopted by its administrative and legislative authorities, to provide for the physical development and improvement of the city within its present legal limits. Based on a careful appraisal of the social needs and economic resources, it furnishes a basic pattern for the guidance of normal change and growth within the city's legal and financial capacity.

Specifically, the plan has the following objectives:

1. Designation of the most appropriate locations for homes, industry, commerce and other major types of urban land use.
2. Provision of schools, recreational areas, and other public service facilities adequate to the needs of all neighborhoods and communities.
3. Development of trafficways and transportation facilities to interconnect and serve the needs of all parts of the city.
4. Establishment of a pattern of neighborhoods and communities which can be a sound basis for action to protect good residential areas, and to rebuild areas now blighted and out-worn.
5. Development of a Civic Center, a Cultural Center and Detroit's natural heritage in the riverfront.

THE MASTER PLAN IS RELEVANT TODAY

As these objectives are worked out in detailed maps and plans, they have a widespread importance to many people in many parts of the city.

To the family building a new home, they tell where the children will walk to schools and playgrounds, where the housewife will go to shop.

To the man travelling to work or downtown, they tell where highway improvements and expressways will be built in the future.

To the merchant locating a new store, they show the size and general character of the residential area which his store will serve.

To the builder and developer, they show the areas which will be available for residential building, both on vacant land, and on land which the city proposes to prepare for rebuilding.

To the industrialist, they show the size and location of areas suitable for industrial development.

The plan has received formal approval of the Mayor and the Common Council. It is used by them and by the operating departments as a basis for administrative decisions in zoning matters, and decisions as to the need and location of public services. With the recreation areas, expressways and public buildings now being developed, Detroit can truly say that it is realizing its Master Plan.

However, much remains unrealized. Since the Plan sets objectives for the next twenty-five years, it is in order to review the means by which it will be realized.

In general the provisions of the Master Plan fall into two groups: those which affect private building activities, and those which involve public improvements or require public funds.

The first group will come about largely through the regulations of land use in the zoning ordinance. Zoning districts established in accordance with the Master Plan will limit development of vacant land to those kinds of structures and activities which are shown in the land use plan. The same limitations will, of course, govern the rebuilding where old buildings or areas are razed, even though the slowness of the processes of replacement will make the controls less apparent.

The second group of Master Plan provisions depend for their realization upon the rate at which public funds can be made available for their realization. Detroit has substantially increased its capital budget in recent years so that considerable progress has been made even since this Master Plan was first developed. Map locations designated, "Proposed" give some indication of the needs yet to be met.